The Advantages of GOVERNMENT, *and the Duty of preserving it.*

A

SERMON

PREACH'D at the

ASSIZES

HELD AT

Kingston upon Thames,

March 22. 1715.

Before the Right Honourable

THOMAS L^d *PARKER,*

Lord Chief-Justice of the *King's-Bench*;

And Mr. Justice *TRACY.*

By *J. Leng,* D. D. Rector of *Bedington.*

Published at the Request of the High-Sheriff, and the Gentlemen of the Grand-Jury.

LONDON:

Printed for R. KNAPLOCK, at the *Bishop's-Head* in St. *Paul's Church-Yard.* MDCCXVI.

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TO

Joſeph Bagnal, Eſq;

High-Sheriff of the County of SURREY.

AND TO

Thomas Onſlow, Eſq; Foreman.

John Lade
Henry Temple
Walter Kent
George Ballard
William Hatten
Thomas Stevens
Benjamin Woolley
Thomas Burroughs
Richard Lewin
Ambroſe Parker
John Dewey
} Eſqrs;

Thomas Malyn
Robert Auſten
William Parker
Charles Hoskins
Samuel Palmer
Wight Wooley
John Ackworth
Samuel Kentiſh
} Eſqrs;

Daniel Wight
Richard Hawes
John Wheeler
} Gent.

Gentlemen of the Grand-Jury for the ſaid County;

This SERMON, Publiſhed at their Requeſt, is humbly Dedicated.

TO

Joseph Bagnal, Esq;

High-Sheriff of the County
of SURREY.

AND TO

Thomas Onslow, Esq; Foreman.

John Lade	Thomas Martyn	
Henry Temple	Robert Aufrere	
Walter Kent	William Parker	
George Ballard	Charles Hoskins	Esqrs;
William Hatter	Samuel Palmer	
Thomas Stevens, Esqrs;	Wright Wooley	
Benjamin Wooley	John Ashworth	
Thomas Burrough	Samuel Kemish	
Richard Levett	Daniel Wright	
Ambrose Parker	Richard Hawes	Gent.
John Dewey	John Wheeler	

Gentlemen of the Grand-Jury for the said County;

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ROM. XIII. 3, 4.

For Rulers are not a Terror to good Works, but to the Evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the Power? Do that which is Good, and thou shalt have Praise of the same. For he is the Minister of God to thee for Good. But if thou do that which is Evil, be afraid, for he beareth not the Sword in vain; for he is the Minister of God, a Revenger to execute Wrath upon him that doth Evil.

THE Apostle commanding all Christians to be subject to the Higher Powers, makes use of Two sorts of Arguments to enforce the Duty. The First, in the beginning of this Chapter, taken from the Original of Government, which he affirms in General to be from God; *for there is no Power but of God, and the Powers that be are ordained of God.* Meaning thereby, (as St. *Chrysostom* interprets it) not that every particular Ruler is immediately from God, but that Government it self is so; and that it is contrived by the Wisdom of God, that for the good Order of Human Society, some should be

Rulers, and others Subjects. And therefore to withstand common Authority, is *to resist the Ordinance of God.* But lest this Mind of Arguing should seem hard, as tending rather to Silence than Convince Men, he adds another, representing the great Benefit of this Ordinance of God, in the Words of the Text, *For Rulers are not a Terror to Good Works*, &c.

And in speaking to these Words, it may be fit to consider briefly, a few Propositions that are plainly included in them; and then to make some such Inferences as will naturally follow from them, and may be proper to the present Season.

Now the Words do plainly contain or imply these Four following Propositions.

1. That it is the Duty of all Rulers and Magistrates, to be a Terror to Evil Men, and a Guard and Protection to the Good.

2. That generally speaking, it is so ordered by the Providence of God, that Government is a great Security to good Men, and a great Restraint upon the Wicked.

3. That good Men have therefore great Reason to proceed in a Course of Virtue, from this Consideration, That the better they are, the more they will be under the Guard of Law and Government.

4. That wicked Men have Reason to be afraid of the Higher Powers; because, very probably, even in this World, they may be brought to Punishment.

1. That it is the Duty of all Rulers and Magistrates, to be a Terror to Evil Men, and a Guard and Protection to the Good. This, indeed, is not said directly in the Text, but it is necessarily implied in it; for when the Apostle says, that Rulers are not a Terror to good Works, but to the Evil, he certainly supposes that they ought to be such, this being the End for which they were ordained; and that this is the End of Government, cannot reasonably be denied by any, but these Two Sorts of People.

1. Those wild Enthusiasts, who hold all Government or Magistracy among Christians, to be unlawful, as some *Anabaptists* did in their first arising; and some other Crazy-headed People have since done, which kind of Doctrine would soon, by Experiment in Practice, confute itself. Or, 2. Those who hold that Good and Evil, or Virtue and Vice, are Arbitrary, as being not founded upon Eternal Reason, and the Nature of Things, but mutable and alterable, at the Pleasure of the Supreme Magistrate. And it is not to be expected that these Men should think it the Duty of Magistrates, or the End of Government, to defend antecedent Virtue, or punish Vice, who think all Moral Good and Evil made by Authority, and subsequent to it. I shall not now spend Time to confute this pernicious Opinion; but taking it for granted, that the End of Government is the Preservation of Good Men, and the Punishment and Restraint of Evil Doers, in which the Peace and Welfare of Mankind, as naturally made for Society, does consist, it will necessarily follow,

Sleiden's Com. lib. 10.

that it is the Duty of all Governors and Magistrates, as much as in them lies, to pursue this End. For if Government be *ordained of God*, as the Apostle plainly tells us it is; that is, if it were originally designed by God, in the very framing of Human Nature, that there should be Government in every Society, in order to the general Happiness of it, as indeed all Things of Universal and Natural Benefit to Mankind are truly said to be of God's Appointment; and if God hath so ordered the Nature of Mankind, ever since there was any Propension in Man to do Evil, than without some directing and restraining Power, there could be no quiet living in the World; and therefore, both by his Providence made it necessary, and by his Direction, wherever he hath interposed, shewn the Way, how the Evil of Anarchy and Confusion might be avoided; and in some special Cases, pointed out the very Choice of Governors to some particular People; and where he has not, yet has endued all other Nations with Reason to provide themselves with such Government, as might best answer the Ends of Society; and whatever Model or Form of Administration they pitch upon, in Pursuance of this Natural Reason, as best suited to the Numbers, Situation, or other Circumstances of the Society, though it be but an *Human Constitution*, or *Ordinance of Man*, as St. *Peter* justly calls it, *whether it be the King as Supreme, or Governors as sent by him*; yet it is to be *submitted to for the Lord's Sake*, as being agreeable to his Original

1 Pet. 2. 13.

Design when he made Man a sociable Creature; So that the Exercise of all just Power has both his Allowance and Approbation. And if Rulers and Magistrates are God's Ministers and Officers, which he is pleased to make use of as his visible Vicegerents in the Administration of Humane Affairs; This, how great a Privilege soever it may seem, is so far from setting them at Liberty to govern as they please, that it is the strongest Obligation imaginable to the due Performance of their Duty. For the more of their Power and Authority they owe to God, so much the more severely accountable must they own themselves to be to him, as being more immediately under his Direction, and obliged to govern both by his Precept and Example, as well as by his Authority, who designs the Good and Happiness of all his creatures. For though wicked Spirits, who design the Mischief of Mankind, or wicked Men, seeking some corrupt Advantage of their own, more than the publick Welfare, might be willing to confer on Rulers an Authority to do wickedly; yet this is no part of God's Authority, but an Abuse of the Pretence to it; for he has given no Man *License*, and much less *Authority* to Sin. So that to such Magistrates and Rulers as make a right Estimate of their own Authority, nothing can be a greater or stronger Motive to the strict and conscientious Performance of their Duty, than this Consideration, that they derive all their just Power from God, and are to be obeyed for his Sake; but that further than this, they have no

no Commission of his to warrant them. And this Consideration concerns not only the Supreme, but all Subordinate Magistrates to whom any measure of Authority is committed; and therefore the Psalmist uses this Argument, that because *God standeth in the Congregation of Princes, and judgeth among Gods (or, Rulers) therefore they should not judge unjustly, nor accept the Persons of the wicked, but defend the Poor and Fatherless, and do Justice to the afflicted.* And King *Jehoshaphat* charges his Judges, *Take heed what ye do, for ye judge not for Man but for the Lord, who is with you in Judgment.* And therefore I shall not insist any further upon this Head, but proceed to the second Particular, *viz.*

Ps. 82.1,2.

That generally speaking, it is so ordered by the Providence of God, that Government is a great Security to good Men, and a great Restraint upon the Wicked; for the most part, *Rulers are not a Terror to good Works, but to the Evil.* This, I say, is the Case generally speaking, for it cannot be denied, that sometimes, even in the best Governments, some particular good Men may meet with hard Usage, and some Offenders escape unpunished; and this the Apostle could not but be aware of, for the very Profession of the Christian Religion, at the Time when he writ this Epistle, and for a considerable Time after did expose the Professors thereof to many Persecutions, which were not only wink'd at, but sometimes encouraged by the then Powers of the World, who were not rightly informed of their Case; as happened

pened even under some of the best of the *Roman* Emperors in other Respects: and yet, for all this, he asserts it for a general Truth, That *Rulers are not a Terror to good Works, but to the Evil*: God by his Providence taking Care that what was by him designed for the general Good of Mankind, should not ordinarily fail of that Effect.

As for those who Rule in the Fear of God, and make his Honour, and the Good and Benefit of those whom they govern, the principal Aim and Design of their Administration, there is no doubt, but they will to the utmost of their Power endeavour to defend and encourage good Men, and to punish and discountenance Evil-doers: And 'tis a great Blessing, for which we ought always to be thankful to God Almighty, to live under a Government conscientiously careful to pursue the Ends of its Institution. *Happy are the People that are in such a Case*, if they could but be sensible of their own Happiness, and wise enough to preserve and make a good Use of it.

And as for those Rulers who are not so mindful of their Duty as they ought to be, yet even they are by the wise Contrivance of Providence made Instruments of much good in the World, though without, or sometimes against their own Designs; being obliged to it for their own Preservation, and for the maintaining their Authority; which they cannot but see, they would soon bring to dissolution, if they should set themselves directly against the Ends of their Institution; so that the Advantages which good Men receive from

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from Government, are many, and do much exceed the Prejudices they can ordinarily receive by it (excepting ſome particular Caſes, which they may be content to bear with for the common good) even when Rulers are not ſo careful of their Duty as they ought to be; provided there be not a deſigned overturning of all Laws; which is a Caſe of Violence, and can never hold long.

It is not neceſſary to enter into a Diſcourſe of the great Benefit of Government in general, ſince the common Senſe of Mankind has agreed, that it is not only uſeful and expedient, but neceſſary. Let it only be conſidered, that if God intended Government for the Security of publick Happineſs, That Government muſt needs be moſt agreeable to his Will, wherein this general Good is moſt effectually provided for, by ſuch known Laws, as it may be the Intereſt, as well as Duty, both of Rulers and Subjects to obſerve. This is what all wiſe Governments do really purſue, and what even the weakeſt pretend to aim at. And therefore

3. Good Men have great Reaſon to proceed in a Courſe of Virtue from this Conſideration, that the better they are, the more ſecure they will be under the Guard of Law and Government. *Wilt thou then not be afraid of the Power? do that which is good, and thou ſhalt have praiſe of the ſame.* Would you enjoy the Protection and Benefit of the Law, and the Countenance and Favour of Authority? The beſt way to do this, is to

to live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this World, and to keep a Conſcience void of Offence, both towards God and Man. A true Chriſtian may ſafely ſhew forth the *Fruits of the Spirit*, which are *Love, Joy, Peace, Long-ſuffering, Gentleneſs, Goodneſs, Faith, Meekneſs, Temperance*; *againſt ſuch* the Apoſtle aſſures us, *There is no Law*. The practice of Juſtice, Charity, Fidelity, Modeſty, Peaceableneſs, and the like Virtues, can never bring us under any Penalties; for 'tis the Intereſt of every Government to protect and encourage them: And the contrary to theſe Virtues are not, in the Nature of Things, capable of being commanded by Law. Now that this Conſideration ought to have ſome weight with us, to move us to Virtue and good Living; Let us conſider, how great a part of our Quiet and Happineſs in this World depends upon a Freedom from thoſe Troubles and Miſchiefs which Ill Men create to themſelves, by incurring the Cenſure of the Law, or living in fear and dread of it; and certainly the beſt way to avoid that, is to live the in ſteady practice of thoſe Virtues which the Laws are made to maintain and promote. To be juſt and honeſt in all our Dealings, true and faithful to our Promiſes, Sincere and Upright in all our Deſigns, to be Sober and Temperate in our Behaviour, Kind and Merciful and obliging to others, Prudent and Diligent in our Callings, not meddling with other Mens Matters, nor engaging our ſelves in any Faction or Party, to the Diſturbance of the publick Peace, but demeaning our ſelves in-

offensively to all Men, can never make us uneasy to our selves, or provoke others against us; much less can any Law take hold of us, or Magistrate be offended at us, *who is the Minister of God to us for Good.* And therefore, *He that will love Life and see good Days, let him refrain his Tongue from Evil, and his Lips that they speak no Guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek Peace and ensue it.* This is an approved Prescription for an Happy Life, both in the Old and New Testament, and in the very Nature of Things. *For who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is Good?* as St. *Peter* says. This Method he prescribed to Christians, when the Powers of the World were prejudiced against them. But when both Laws and Rulers are Christian, good Men have still greater Advantages to hope for. They are then not only out of Danger from the Higher Powers by a Virtuous Life, but have reason to expect their particular Favour and Protection; not only a Defence from the unjust Insults of other People, but a due Reward and Commendation, if their Actions are Deserving and Praise Worthy; *Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the Power.* For Men of exemplary Virtue and Goodness, are a great Strength, Security, and Ornament to the Government they live under, and so lay a sort of Obligation upon it to take particular Care of their Preservation and Encouragement. Blessed be God, it is our Happiness to live under a Prince to whose Favour and Esteem

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we cannot better recommend our selves, than by a faithful Discharge of our Duty in our several Stations, and living up to the Precepts of our Religion, of which God has made him the Defender, who has on all Occasions declared so great an Affection to our Constitution both in Church and State; and as at his first coming he express'd his great Pleasure to see among us *the happy Effects of making every Man's Property secure*; so he has since continually made it his great Concern, to preserve us safe in the Enjoyment of our Religion and Civil Rights, notwithstanding the ungrateful Returns he has met with-al of Sedition and Rebellion, without the least shadow of Provocation: And we have all the reason in the World to hope, that the Government of such a Prince would be a mighty Encouragement to all Virtue, if we did but try the Experiment in making our selves worthy of it.

Now, though it must be confessed, that these worldly Advantages of the Favour and Protection of Government and Laws, are far from being the only or the Chief Arguments that ought to move us to the practice of Virtue and Religion, (which would be our Duty from higher Considerations, though we should fail of these;) yet these in their kind are not to be despised, for the Apostle himself uses it as some Recommendation of *Godliness*, that it has *the promise of the Life that now is, as well as of that which is to come.* But this Advantage will farther appear, if we consider,

4. That wicked Men have Reaſon to be afraid of the Higher Powers, becauſe, very probably, even in this World they may be brought to puniſhment for their Crimes; *If thou do that which is Evil, be afraid, for he is the Miniſter of God, a Revenger to execute wrath upon him that doth Evil.* This Argument, indeed, may ſeem but of ſmall Force in Compariſon to the Conſideration of thoſe eternal Puniſhments, which wicked Men have reaſon to expect in another Life, which yet we ſee Men daily harden themſelves againſt. But then it is to be obſerved, that wicked Men either do not fully believe thoſe Threatnings of God which relate to another Life only, as is too evidently the Caſe of ſome; or elſe they look upon them at ſuch a diſtance, as will not ſuffer them to have their due weight upon their Minds; or, laſtly, they are ſo ſtrongly moved by the Things of this World, that they give themſelves no leiſure to think of the next: And for theſe Reaſons, the fear of the preſent Puniſhments of this Life will work more upon ſome notorious Offenders, to reſtrain them, at leaſt, from the outward Acts of Wickedneſs, than any Arguments drawn from a future Judgment: And to ſuch it is proper to urge this Conſideration, That how ſecure ſoever they may think themſelves in the Commiſſion of their Villanies, yet the Time may very probably come, when they leaſt expect it, That even in this World they may be called to account for their Wickedneſs. For how many Thouſands have

have fallen under the Hands of Justice for those Crimes, which they thought they had committed with the greatest Secrecy? How many private Villanies have been brought to light by very unexpected Accidents? How many secret Treasons and Conspiracies? How many clandestine Murders and other studiously concealed Crimes have been wonderfully discovered, by strange, and little, and seemingly casual Occurrences, to the Confusion and Punishment of their Authors and Contrivers? And how can any wicked Man be sure but this may be his Case? For God having put the Sword of Justice into the Hands of the Magistrate, takes Care, by his Providence, that he shall not always bear it in Vain; but makes him *an Avenger to execute Wrath upon him that doeth Evil.* So that wicked Men have Reason to be afraid of the Higher Powers, even though they put off those Considerations of a future Life, which should deter them from their Wickedness. And they have Reason, more especially to be afraid, when they make their wicked Attempts upon the Higher Powers themselves, as it were to dissolve the Bands of Society, of which they are the Guardians, by open Sedition, or treasonable and rebellious Practices; for Rulers are then obliged, both for the publick Safety, and for their own personal Security, to drawn the Sword of Justice against them: They are under a tie both of Duty and Necessity to punish such evil Doers.

Having

Having thus briefly spoken to the several Propositions, which are principally implied in the Text, I shall proceed to make some plain Inferences from them, which may be proper to the present Circumstances of Affairs among us.

1. We may from this Account which the Apostle gives of the Advantages of Government, in the Text, see the Reasonableness of that Duty which he infers from it in the following Words, *Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for Wrath, but also for Conscience Sake*, i. e. Since it is an Ordinance of God so very Useful and Beneficial to the Good of Mankind, we ought not only to bear with it, because we cannot hinder it without Fear of Punishment; but also out of Conscience to God and the Duty we owe to the publick Happiness of Society, willingly to comply with, and by a ready Obedience Support and Maintain so useful and necessary an Institution. For since Law and Government, Princes and Rulers, and the several Degrees of Magistracy are so necessary to secure the Peace and Welfare of the World, it must needs be the Duty, as well as Interest, of every Member of Society in his respective Station, to help and assist them in the Discharge of their Office, which tends so much to the publick Good: To Obey all their just Commands, and to stand up in their Defence whenever they are invaded. For as Law and Government are the common Defence of every Man's Right; so every Man that expects this Benefit,

nefit, is bound to defend those that Administer them, because they cannot protect us in our Right, if we defert them, or refuse them our Assistance. For the protecting Power of the Prince or Ruler, being nothing else but the Power of the Society applied by his Direction, must be just so far disabled, as that Direction is not complied with; and therefore the same Law of God, and the same Reason that Commands Kings and Princes to do Justice, and to Rule in the Fear of God, Commands Subjects also to Obey them for Conscience Sake, and to *submit themselves to every Ordinance of Man for the Lord's Sake, whether it be to the King as Supreme, or unto Governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the Punishment of evil Doers, and for the praise of them that do well.*

Many Disputes have been raised about the Limits of Submission, or whether it ought to be without all Limits. And because all positive Laws (which in Reason and Decency suppose a settled Administration of Law) forbid Resistance; some have run the Case to that Extremity, as to infer that under a Subversion of all Laws, there is no Remedy in Conscience, but that the whole Body of a Nation is bound to submit to the greatest illegal Violence of one who once had a legal Title to Subjection; whereby the very end of Government will be destroyed by that which was designed for the means of its Preservation. And on the other Hand, there are some who not having the publick Happiness, but their own private De-

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ſigns in View, are forward to interpret every little Miſcarriage in a Governor to be a publick Grievance, and would alarm private Subjects to ſtand upon their Guard, as if the whole Commonwealth were in great Danger, when only ſome particular Party or Faction are diſpleaſed. An Experience of leſs than Thirty Years may convince every honeſt and peaceable Man of the Folly and Miſchief of both the Extremes, to which the neceſſary Moral and Chriſtian Duty of Obedience may, by undue Explications, be expoſed, when it is once made a Diſpute among contending Parties. And the Miſchief is, that ſome of thoſe who, not long ſince, ſeemed very angry with all that expreſs'd any diſſent, though never ſo modeſtly, to one Extreme, are now on a ſudden practiſing all the worſt Conſequences of the other, as if they had either ſtrained the Doctrine of Subjection, with an intent to have it broken, or thought the preſſing of Submiſſion without Bounds in Principle, would make amends for Sedition and Rebellion in Practice.

I know not whether ſome very honeſt and well-deſigning Men may not have been diſcouraged from preſſing the plain practical Duty of Obedience to the Higher Powers, even at this Time when it was very neceſſary, for fear of being miſunderſtood in ſo nice a Caſe as this is now become, by being made Matter of Diſpute, rather than of Practice. But when an undeniable Duty is manifeſtly neglected, and Acts of Sedition break out, and open Rebellion has been attempted, contrary to the avowed Principles of all that

that have reasoned soberly upon this Duty; we ought to follow St. *Paul's* Direction to *Titus*, and *put Men in Mind to be subject to Principalities and Powers, to obey Magistrates, to be ready to every good Work*; and no Man ought to brand us with the Name of Politicians, or Time-servers, when we endeavour to perswade them to a necessary Duty, in which (of late) many have been deficient. Let us therefore follow the plain Sense of the Apostle's Doctrine in this Chapter, neither encouraging the wide Extravagancies of a Lawless Power, as if it were God's Authority, on the one Hand; nor covering our private Discontents with a Pretence of publick Good, in order to violate our Allegiance to a lawful Government, on the other. And never carefully preserved our excellent Constitution both in Church and State, by avoiding one of these Evils at the happy Revolution, which under the Conduct of His late Majesty of Glorious Memory, then rescued it from extreme Danger; So let every true Lover of his King and Country, be as careful at this Time, to preserve the same Constitution, by avoiding the other: That is, by living in a true Christian Subjection to our Gracious Sovereign King *GEORGE*, as *the Minister of God to us for Good*, and obeying him chearfully for Conscience Sake; not fomenting Tumults or Seditions, or abetting any Party or Faction, by what specious Names soever they may call themselves, that seek to disturb the publick Peace; nor by any false Representations of his Administration, alienating the Minds of weak

and unwary People from their due Affection to His Majesty's Person, or Obedience to his Government; but discouraging as much as we can, all those villanous and malicious Slanders, that are so plentifully spread about in the Dark, by lying Agents, to rob him of the Love of his People. Let us, in our several Capacities, assist all those who are in Authority under him, to preserve the Publick Peace, to maintain the Laws, and to defend our Country in Time of Danger, against all the wicked Attempts of such as design Ruine or Mischief to our Establish'd Religion and Government. The Duty of Obedience requires something more of us, than barely to be Passive, and sit still, as if we were unconcerned how things went, when not only the Crown and Dignity of our Rightful and Lawful King, but his Sacred Life, and the whole Protestant Succession, upon which depends every Thing that is dear to us, either as a free Nation, or a reformed Church, is so apparently struck at. Therefore, let no selfish Designs, or little Party Animosities, hinder our common Zeal for the Service of our Gracious Sovereign, or disappoint His Care for the Publick Good, and the lasting Security of our own just Rights and Liberties, under his auspicious Government, but let us all unite, in our Prayers and our Endeavours, to secure those Blessings to Posterity, which have so lately been attempted to be taken from us. This is implied in that Duty of Obedience, which the Laws of God, and of our Country, require from us, and which our Oaths of Fi-

delity

duty and Allegiance bind us to. And it is no more than what our Interest both Civil and Religious directs us to, if we have any real concern for the preserving that Religion which we profess and to which we can be so far infatuated, as to think that a Protestant Church is not better secured by a legal Establishment under a Protestant King, and a Succession of Princes, obliged both by Laws and Principle to defend it, than by the mere Will and Pleasure of a Pretender, bred up in such Maxims of Popery and Arbitrary Power as must engage him even in Conscience, to destroy it. A Man may without Breach of Charity, fully suspect that those Men sit loose to the Protestant Religion, that can be so much as indifferent what Choice to make in such a Case, and if we may guess by the Practice of some, that can readily take all Oaths of Fidelity to the Government at the same Time that they make no Scruple of acting directly against the Design of them, we can hardly help concluding, that some of the most dangerous Doctrines of Popery, and of most pernicious Consequence to Society, have already made but too great Advances among us.

2. From one of the Ends of Magistracy here mentioned by the Apostle, we may learn the Unlawfulness of private Revenge, and that the proper way of having our Injuries redress'd, is appealing to the Magistrate, whose Office it is, to relieve the Oppressed, and to help them to Right, that suffer Wrong; and we may lawfully implore his Aid,

where the Injury is grievous, or likely to affect the Publick; though to make Use even of this way, for small and trivial Matters, is a troubling of the Publick, and not according to the peaceable Spirit of the Gospel. God Almighty has declared, that *Vengeance is his, and he will repay it*; and the Text tells us, that the Magistrate is his Minister to execute it; *He is the Minister of God, a Revenger to execute Wrath upon him that doth Evil.* So that he who assumes Revenge to himself in his own Cause, and will not submit to a legal Determination, breaks loose from the Bonds of Society, and is an Offender both against God, and his Vicegerent; against God, by doing what he has expressly forbidden; and against his Vicegerent, by invading his Office, and taking that Power out of his Hand, which God has peculiarly committed to him. And 'tis a grievous Reflection to consider, that a mistaken Pretence of Honour, should in a Christian Country, so often trample upon all Laws, both Divine and Human.

But the most dangerous kind of Revenge is, when Men of turbulent and ambitious Spirits endeavour to bring the Publick into Confusion, break out into Rebellion, and fly in the Face of Law and Government it self, for some pretended Affront or Neglect, or because they cannot bear a Rival in Power, or because they do not hold that Rank in their Prince's Favour, which their own Pride prompts them to think they deserve better than others; or else because some of those whom they undeservedly Hate or Envy, are thought fit

to

to be trusted or preferred before them. Such as these are usually the wicked Springs of this sort of Revenge; for what St. *James* says in general, *from whence come Wars and Fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your Lusts that war in your Members*, is most certainly true in this Case; for these are the real Motives, whatever the pretended ones may be. But certainly the Wisdom of any Prince or Government that is careful of the Publick Safety, is extreamly justified in not employing those Men in Places of Authority, who can presently forget all Promises and Obligations to maintain it, for no other Reason, but because themselves are not employed according to their Minds. For such Men shew by their Practice, either that they never mean sincerely in their Professions of Duty and Loyalty, or that their Tempers are so Mutable, as not to be safely relied on; or else, that they think no Fidelity or Obedience due, upon Account of Conscience, or Consideration of Publick Good, how well soever it be prosecuted, unless it be Administred by their Hands; that is, unless their own particular and separate Interest and Ambition be also gratified. When Men are once possest with a Spirit of Pride and Revenge, there is no Mischief, either to private Conversation, or publick Society, that may not be apprehended from them. And therefore it becomes us all, both as we are Christians, professing Obedience to the Divine Command, and as we are Men, united in publick Society, and expecting to reap the

Benefit

Benefit of Law and Government, chiefly to do or beware of giving way to those unruly Passions, that

3. And Lastly, As Government is a great Blessing to any Nation; so the best way to Establish and Preserve a good Government is by the general Practice of This will both add a Natural Strength to it, and procure the Blessing of God upon it, which is its greatest Security. When Vice and Wickedness of all Kinds prevail much in a Nation, the Numbers of those become very great, whose Interest it is to Ruin or Weaken a Government that would restrain them; for every wicked Man is, in one or other, an Enemy to good and steady Government, which is to *Terror to Evil Doers, and a Praise to those that do well.* Men that desire a Security for their Vices, as well as their Persons, will endeavour to Screen themselves from that Minister of God, *who is a Revenger to execute Wrath upon him that doeth Evil.* So that wicked People will naturally weaken the Hands of the best Prince, and the justest Government, and *Righteousness* only will *Exalt* and Strengthen a *Nation.* Therefore, if we have any true Affection for the Government under which we Live, and sincerely desire its Preservation and Happiness, the most effectual way to shew it, is by living in a constant Practice of Virtue, and by an unblameable Conversation, suitable to the Purity of that Holy Religion which we profess; this will add

Strength

Strength and Credit to our Establishment, and will be the surest Means of engaging the Providence of God in our Defence, without which all our own Endeavours will avail but little. When a general Corruption of Manners prevails among us, we have more Reason to be afraid of our own Weakness, and the want of God's Favour and Protection, than of all the Strength of our Enemies; for we cannot reasonably expect that he should continually protect us, as he has hitherto done, if we continue to provoke him by our Rebellion and Disobedience to his Commands. Can we hope that he should preserve to us the Security of Religion, when so many among us Despise and Ridicule all Religion, and more are indifferent to it, and so few practise it, or govern their Lives by it? Or why should he still keep us from that Slavery and Oppression which so lately threatned us, if we resolve to abuse our Liberty to Licentiousness, and turn our Security into an occasion of Sin? And if we go on *to bite and devour one another*, he may justly suffer us *to be consumed one of another*. His Design in delivering us from our Enemies, is, that we may serve him without Fear, in Holiness and Righteousness all the Days of our Life; but if we defeat this Design, he can easily make those Evils which so lately made us afraid, or even worse, to return upon us.

To conclude therefore, if we would in earnest shew our selves to be good and faithful Subjects, true Lovers of our Country, and hearty Friends to our